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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000320

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SUBJECT: (S/NF) NIGERIA: KANO BUSINESSMAN ALLEGES YAR'ADUA  
CORRUPTION

REF: 07 ABUJA 2627

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for Reasons 1.4 (b,  
c, & d).

¶1. (S//NF) SUMMARY: XXXXXXXXXXXX alleged a close association between President Yar'Adua and Katsina native and rumored smuggler Dahiru Mangal. XXXXXXXXXXXX claimed Mangal is the President's "Mr. Fix It," taking care of "anything filthy" Yar'Adua needs done in addition to smuggling items for several wealthy Nigerian businessmen through Niger into Kano. Another Kano business contact corroborated XXXXXXXXXXXX 's allegations, but observed that Mangal no longer deals openly in illicit activity since Yar'Adua named him a special advisor earlier this month. As well, XXXXXXXXXXXX maintained that he had been approached by a man claiming to represent First Lady Turai Yar'Adua and seeking an USD 2 million pay-off. While Post cannot independently authenticate these allegations of corruption by the President or First Lady, Post has heard rumors of an emergent "Katsina clique" in the Presidential Villa. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S//NF) Kano real estate entrepreneur and longtime Mission contact XXXXXXXXXXXX told PolOff February 10 that Katsina native Dahiru Mangal, who XXXXXXXXXXXX contends deals in illicit smuggling of goods into Nigeria, is also known as President Yar'Adua's "Mr. Fix It." XXXXXXXXXXXX alleged a close association between the President and Mangal, dating to the former's tenure as governor of Katsina, and claimed the latter remains to this day Yar'Adua's "go-to man" to accomplish "anything filthy that Yar'Adua needs done." Mangal, XXXXXXXXXXXX said, is also the "go-to" for any wealthy Nigerian, who wants to import "just about anything" into Nigeria. He declined to state whether Mangal smuggled weapons, drugs, or persons into Nigeria. (On February 17, PolOff queried another Kano business contact, who corroborated XXXXXXXXXXXX 's accusations, however claimed Mangal no longer goes by "Mr. Fix It" since Yar'Adua officially named him a special advisor earlier this month. Allegedly, Yar'Adua instructed Mangal to cease any illicit activity if Mangal wished to enjoy official recognition by the President. The contact implied this may connote, inter alia, that Yar'Adua desires to maintain at least the appearance of respect for rule of law, and thus, does not want any of his close advisors openly involved in suspect activity.)

¶3. (S//NF) XXXXXXXXXXXX told PolOff XXXXXXXXXXXX several Nigerian businessmen who have employed Mangal's

services over the past several years. Reportedly, Mangal owns a warehouse across the Niger border (likely close to the Katsina border with Jibiyi and Maradi) in which he stores hundreds of 40-foot shipping containers. XXXXXXXXXXXX claimed Mangal is able to import goods from around the world, including China. In return, Mangal requests a flat fee of 2 million naira (USD 17,000), excluding the cost of goods. Approximately 100 containers per month are brought into Kano, and goods are then delivered to clients or sold in Kano's Kurmi market.

¶4. (S//NF) Mangal also operates several legitimate businesses, XXXXXXXXXXXX asserted, including Mangal Airlines. The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria contracted Kabo, Bellview, Meridian, and Mangal Airlines for the December 2007 hajj operations, which transported approximately 100,000 Nigerians to Saudi Arabia for the annual pilgrimage. (Note: Many Nigerian Muslims have criticized the GON's handling of the 2007 hajj claiming several thousand Nigerians were left stranded in Saudi Arabia and could not return to Nigeria, except without extraordinary hardship, and several others were never airlifted from Nigeria at all. End Note.)

¶5. (S//NF) Moreover, XXXXXXXXXXXX said XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX had been approached recently by a man claiming to speak on behalf of First Lady Turai Yar'Adua. The person, who arrived at the meeting with XXXXXXXXXXXX in a Peugeot with a "presidential" license plate, told XXXXXXXXXXXX the First Lady would "allow" them to construct the homes so long as she is given an advance payment of 250 million naira (USD 2 million). XXXXXXXXXXXX said he was willing to offer the First

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Lady twenty plots of land instead, to which the presumed emissary grimaced. The negotiations, XXXXXXXXXXXX told PolOff, continue.

¶6. (C//NF) NOTE: During a late January conversation with PolOff, XXXXXXXXXXXX said XXXXXXXXXXXX purchased an USD 10 million house in central London approximately 7 years ago, XXXXXXXXXXXX. This house apparently was excluded from President Yar'Adua's public declaration of assets in June 2007, which put his total wealth at approximately USD 7 million. END NOTE.

¶7. (S//NF) COMMENT: While XXXXXXXXXXXX is a trusted, longtime Mission contact who has provided veracious information in the past, we cannot independently confirm his statements regarding Mangal or the First Lady. Certainly, the man who approached XXXXXXXXXXXX seeking a pay-off may simply have been attempting to exploit the First Lady's name for personal enrichment. We have heard rumors of the emergence of a "Katsina clique" in the Villa -- a group of individuals from the President's home state of Katsina who reportedly constitute Yar'Adua's inner circle and increasingly, control access to him. The surfacing of this group may be a corollary to Yar'Adua's lack of national exposure (and hence, his deficiently broad support base) and his inability thus far to stamp his authority on the ruling People's Democratic Party. Rumors abound alleging that the First Lady, Special Advisor Tanimu Yakubu, and Minister of Agriculture Sayyadi Ruma are involved in corrupt practices. Reports of both the First Lady and Yakubu's taste for the high life and tendencies toward illicit enrichment surfaced during a December 2007 debrief by XXXXXXXXXXXX outlined problems he saw in the Villa and cases XXXXXXXXXXXX was closely watching (Ref A). Several contacts from XXXXXXXXXXXX, moreover, maintain that while the President "appeared incorruptible" during his tenure as governor, his wife siphoned off millions in public funds for private use. Post will closely monitor these accusations and report any new developments. END COMMENT.

SANDERS